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ABSTRACT

THE PART PLAYED BY GUIDANCE COUNSELORS IN ASSISTING IN THE DESEGREGATION PROCESS HAS BEEN RATHER OBSCURE. IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE ARENA IN WHICH GUIDANCE SPECIALISTS HAVE BEEN OPERATING, THREE KINDS OF CONCERNS ARE REVIEWED. FIRST OF ALL, THE BACKGROUND AND PRACTICES THAT SURROUND THE DESEGREGATION NOTION ARE PRESENTED. THE COUNSELOR IMAGE IS NOT GENERALLY THAT OF AN AIDE TO BLACK STUDENTS. GUIDANCE COUNSELORS CANNOT GUIDE WHAT THEY HAVE REJECTED AND DO NOT KNOW, AND THEY CANNOT DIRECT WHERE THEY HAVE NOT BEEN. THE FIRST NEED IS FOR COUNSELORS TO KNOW THEMSELVES. THE SECOND FACTOR IS TRAINING. MUCH NEEDS TO BE CHANGED IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION TO MAKE COUNSELORS MORE RESPONSIVE TO "BLACK" NEEDS. THIRDLY, BLACK AND WHITE COUNSELORS MUST BE ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER. ALSO, COUNSELORS MUST BE CONCERNED WITH ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND NOT JUST ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE WHITE ONE. THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS SHOULD BE ONE OF DETECTING, PROTECTING AND GUIDING STUDENTS TO THE SOLUTION OF DIFFICULTIES INVOLVING PEOPLE. THEY MUST BE SENSITIVE TO THE FEELINGS OF RESENTMENT AND HOSTILITY OF THEIR CLIENTS, AND INTERESTED AND COMMITTED TO ACCEPTING THE STUDENT FOR WHAT HE IS. (KJ)

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THE ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR IN THE DESEGREGATION PROCESS

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American educators have been in the act of reversing segregated public school education for some fifteen years. During this time, the part played by guidance counselors to assist in this process has been rather obscure. They have been working behind the scenes and have not gained the attention focused upon the roles of politicians, parents, administrators, teachers, and students. In order to understand the arena in which guidance specialists have been operating, three kinds of concerns are reviewed:

1) the background and practices that surrounds the desegregation notion,

2) the image of the traditional guidance counselor, and

3) the force of black solidarity.

DESEGREGATION

Desegregation is the act of removing racist practices that prevent equal access to opportunity in public education. The group that has been most active and vocal in focusing the fight for justice in education has been the Afro-Americans. Most of the projects, programs, research, and this paper, allude to the conditions of black people. However, the facts, opinions, and impressions that have

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developed about this group's experiences with injustice are equally true for minority groups with Spanish surnames, and American Indians.

The Supreme Court of the United States initiated the desegregation process with all "deliberate speed," but since that time the course has been tokenized by state, county, and city boards of education. Some have resisted outright, some have complied, some have installed freedom-of-choice plans, some have called upon de facto and de jure to defend the status quo, some are operating on the "good-faith compliance act," many are playing the numbers game, that is, how many blacks must be present to constitute desegregation, and recently the Supreme Court has returned to the scene to interpret the desegregation process to mean all "immediate" speed. The fact is--segregated education remains the more usual practice than the unusual.

Most of the methods employed to desegregate are being carried out on the prevailing assumption of white superiority. In most school settings where some effort is being made to put some black students here and a few white students there, it is generally the blacks who have to go to the white schools. The system is designed to reject that which is black and to accept that which is white.

Even the work model that black children view daily in the so-called desegregated school, operates on the theory that white is better than black. They no longer see a fairly large number of black school personnel. This is a strange phenomenon. Black educators have made a career of education.

They have the experience in years and have the "paper" credentials according to state certification, yet they are the first to be selected-out of desegregated schools. This is a clear example of adults shirking the law to continue a false notion, and shows the kind of community power and control by whites as opposed to the lack of such power and control by blacks. If this is the kind of desegregation concern for black and white youth to learn, it would appear that blacks are correct in assuming that their children can not be educated for life by a group that rejects their kind.

COUNSELOR IMAGE

Traditionally, guidance counselors have demonstrated their success with children in the middle and upper classes. They have helped these youth with educational, vocational, and some social concerns . These are the children which society rewards for conforming to the status quo. These are the children who live well and enjoy many cultural and psychological advantages over pupils from poor environments.

But with the lower classed children, the one in which most blacks are found, the record of counselors is poor. Evidence from the past shows that counselors have advised blacks not to take part in certain school experiences because it offered them no future; they have used test scores as absolutes to segregate blacks into dead ended vocational and industrial arts courses; they have used these same scores to keep blacks out of colleges, and special schools; they have maintained and interpreted the records of the many black

students who have been sent from school to the streets; they have been some of the strongest advocates of homogenous grouping. They have used this scheme to confirm the notion of black pupil's inferiority by keeping them out of advanced and creative school experiences; counselors have been used as the arm of white school authorities to select-in choice black students to attend previously all white activities. This is whitey's act of good faith and reward for the good house niggers and a slap against those damnable field niggers. Further, school counselors have been noticeably absent from the struggle of black pupils to obtain their civil rights in education. This means that guidance counselors have been playing a major role in the rape of many black children's educational rights and opportunities, simply because the results of their practices have been indistinguishable from the racist practices of the total society.

Consequently, guidance counselors cannot guide what they have rejected and do not know, and they can not direct where they have not been. But if this group of professionals hope to lead instead of following in the desegregation process, they can do so by changing their image and customs.

The first component that needs attention is counselors. Do you really know who you are? When you say you are not prejudiced against children because of their skin color, are you merely verbalizing to save face? Do you realize that blacks know the "phonies." Do you shower your good intentions upon a few chosen blacks, but for the mass of them you hate. Do you live to demonstrate the myth of white superiority? What help can you be to a black child if you do not understand and feel that he grows and develops as a result of environmental manipulations as white children. If you are unable to

be honset with yourself, what chance is there for helping the black child?

A second factor that needs attention is training. You should reject the sterile training of counselors offered by the colleges and universities. These programs, for the most part, are paper mills for middle class saviors only. They show little imagination for preparing guidance specialists to work in inner-city schools. The urban schools are rapidly becoming institutions where the majority of students are black. Yet, the training programs show minor concerns reflecting the life of blacks. Strangely, some of the most important developments for preparing counselors to work with black youth have come from efforts of Job Corps, demonstration projects, community centers, Vista, and street academies. The conservative colleges and universities are so much a part of the white superiority symbol, there is much doubt that your change of image will be enhanced from this source. It may well be that counselors will have to consider receiving a greater proportion of their training through the above community centers, street academies or in-service training in the public schools.

The third force to consider in altering your image is cooperation of black and white counselors. The guidance worker should set the pace in showing how a warm human relationship can be structured and maintained. They should be willing to depend upon the subjective factors of man rather than cold objectivity in demonstrating they care for and support each other. This humanizing process seems necessary because for the first time, many white counselors will be faced with a large population of poor black youth, and some black counselors will be exposed to a large segment of middle class

white students. If the big problem for black counselors is to overcome the feeling of inferiority, and the big difficulty for white counselors to overcome is the feeling of superiority; they must give each other help frequently. What better way to demonstrate that people with different ethnic backgrounds can work, love, and live as equals.

BLACK SOLIDARITY

The third concern necessary to examine in the desegregation process is the emphasis of black togetherness. If guidance specialists do not understand this force in desegregation, they will experience nothing but failure in relating to blacks.

This concept has developed as a result of black people becoming acutely aware that the majority culture has conditioned them to hate themselves. Blackness as portrayed by the white man spelled evil. The very word "black" shows more negative meanings than is true with the word "white" according to Roget's Thesaurus of the English Language. Black culture with respect to language habits, literature taste, foods, music, family habits, and general style of life was thought of as being primitive because it did not ape that of whites. Black women and men were not considered beautiful because they did not look like the white man's symbol of beauty. The history of black people was considered almost non-existent by the so-called best white historical scholars. At long last, blacks are rejecting this stupid concept.

Black solidarity means getting yourself together to do your own act.

Afro-Americans are affirming the beauty of blackness because it frees them for self-affirmation of their own being as black men! The point of this emphasis is that blacks will decide what values are of interest and importance to them. No longer will blacks permit whites to choose Abe Lincoln and George Washington as their heros when Malcolm X, W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Leroi Jones, and others are their choices. Blacks must control experiences that affect their lives; and they must play a dominant role in determing the black-white relationship. Counselors and other school functionaries must understand this change in the behavior of blacks in order to avoid more unrest and frustration in the process of desegregation. After all, the movement is dominated by black youth.

Guidance counselors may begin relating to this change by being aware of two terms used to refer to this minority group--blacks and Afro-Americans. This should be one of the first adjustments that counselors make in relating to this group of students. These names are their choices. Whites who continue to use old terms in referring to blacks are viewed with disdain, whether the act is done out of habit, ignorance, or arrogance.

Guidance specialists must understand that while black youth are interested in their own lot, they are equally concerned about their role in the larger society. These young people must be guided and prepared to live and serve in their home communities, as well as in the integrated one. For example, they must have command of so-called standard language usuage to communicate in the larger society. And they must have command and feel free to use their cultural language to communicate with their people.

Black youth and white youth have many fresh ideas and courage to offer in solving the problem of racism in this country. Consequently, guidance counselors should do whatever is necessary to encourage them getting together in their own school to help solve society's people problems. One of these difficulties may be finding ways of helping parents remove hostility toward innocent children in desegregation matters.

The surge of black solidarity is becoming a strong source of motivation in making black parents and their children more demanding about accountability. No longer are blacks going to be tolerant when counselors can not be held accountable. For too long, both black and white counselors are unable to show what they have been doing to and with the black child. Certainly the evidence is overwhelming that the black child has not succeeded in school: too many have dropped out; too many have obtained the least desirable positions in our society; too many are in our ghettos unqualified to do any of the skilled work of this country; too many are unable to get into the community colleges; too many are absent from offices in the government of our cities; and therefore, counselors must take the responsibility for some of this negative guidance.

Blacks want to know why their young people have not been guided to become superintendents of schools, directors of guidance, and space mechanics in larger numbers. They want to know why the same chances for success with the average black child has not been created in the desegregated setting as for the average white child. Guidance counselors working in the desegregation process must be concerned with accountability to the black community and not just accountability to the white one.

A REVISED GUIDANCE MODEL

In view of the racist environment in which we live, the traditionally trained counselor, and the rise of black solidarity, a renovated guidance model is necessary for effective functioning in the desegregation process. This guidance specialist must be acclaimed to be the guardian authorized to protect the welfare of students against the forces of dehumanization. This will mean working to protect the right of students to be different, the right of students to participate in all of the activities of the school, the right to reject adult "phoneyness" and lies, and the right to organize for protest to preserve all basic human rights. This guidance counselor must be broadly trained and sensitized to the feelings and life of the students he serves. This position can no longer be used to promote a senior teacher tired of the classroom. This type of counselor will not wait for students to come to him, he will seek them out when necessary. He will be more concerned with guiding than perhaps counseling. He will spend more time working with groups of students. He will likely spend more time outside of his office than inside, and his hours of work will be more irregular than regular. He will be expected to fight against the use of any test, regulation or instructional scheme designed to instill negative concepts of self.

The guidance specialist must be interested in orienting black students and white students to the new school. He must be interested in consulting with teachers, principals, directors of guidance, welfare agencies, employment agencies, parents or any other individual or institution in the

school or outside of the school who can help youngsters develop to their fullest. If a student is in poor health, if he does not have the proper clothing, if he does not have proper food, if he does not have the proper rapport with his teachers, his academic, physical, social and emotional life suffers. The guidance specialist must help this student by bringing together individuals in conference where better relations, better understanding, and more human feeling can be developed in order to solve a child's problem. This is what guidance is all about in desegregation.

If the role of guidance counselors in desegregation is to be one of detecting, protecting, and guiding students to the solution of difficulties involving people, they must be sensitive to the feelings of resentment and hostility of their clients without becoming upset and useless; they must be interested and committed to accepting the student for what he is and helping him to become; and counselors must be willing to operate from any theoretical position which enables them to assist the growth and development of a client. Since, the process of desegregation tends to follow a complex pattern of compromising the rights and opportunities of one ethnic group to the advantage of the other, the guidance counselors must fight for a vital role in the eradication of racism by promoting respect for the integrity of human dignity.

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